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BATMAN
CAT
HANNIGAN & GIORDANO
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BAT MAN VS. CATMAN
MORTAL FOES IN A CONTEST OF CUNNING WITS AND STUNNING FISTS!
CREATED BY BOB KANE
NINE LIVES ARE MINE, BATMAN...
...EACH ONE A TIGHTROPE TO YOUR DOOM!
NINE CRADLES OF DEATH
DOUG MOENCH writer
DON NEWTON artist
ALFREDO ALCALA inker
BEN ODA ADRIENNE ROY letterer colorist
LEN WEIN editor

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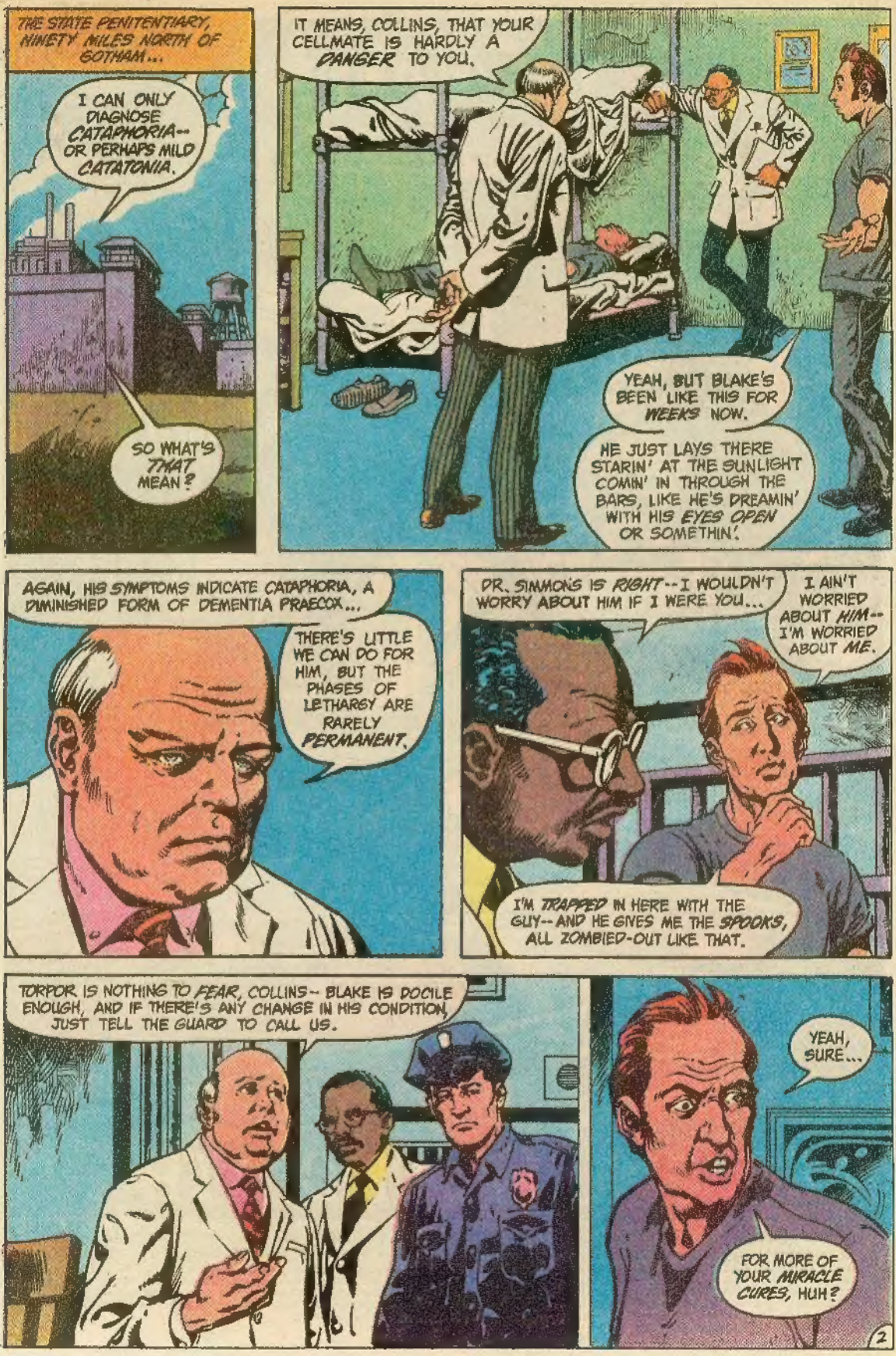

THE STATE PENITENTIARY, NINETY MILES NORTH OF GOTHAM...
I CAN ONLY DIAGNOSE CATAPHORIA-- OR PERHAPS MILD CATATONIA.
SO WHAT'S THAT MEAN?
IT MEANS, COLLINS, THAT YOUR CELLMATE IS HARDLY A DANGER TO YOU.
YEAH, BUT BLAKE'S BEEN LIKE THIS FOR WEEKS NOW.
HE JUST LAYS THERE STARIN' AT THE SUNLIGHT COMIN' IN THROUGH THE BARS, LIKE HE'S DREAMIN' WITH HIS EYES OPEN OR SOMETHIN'.
AGAIN, HIS SYMPTOMS INDICATE CATAPHORIA, A DIMINISHED FORM OF DEMENTIA PRAECOX...
THERE'S LITTLE WE CAN DO FOR HIM, BUT THE PHASES OF LETHARGY ARE RARELY PERMANENT.
DR. SIMMONS IS RIGHT--I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT HIM IF I WERE YOU...
I AIN'T WORRIED ABOUT HIM-- I'M WORRIED ABOUT ME.
I'M TRAPPED IN HERE WITH THE GUY--AND HE GIVES ME THE SPOOKS, ALL ZOMBIED-OUT LIKE THAT.
TORPOR IS NOTHING TO FEAR, COLLINS-- BLAKE IS DOCILE ENOUGH, AND IF THERE'S ANY CHANGE IN HIS CONDITION, JUST TELL THE GUARD TO CALL US.
YEAH, SURE...
FOR MORE OF YOUR MIRACLE CURES, HUH?
2

NIGHT, AND WHAT'S A GUY TO DO WHEN THE DARKNESS MAKES IT WORSE!
EVEN CLIMBING PAST HIM TO THE UPPER BUNK IS ENOUGH TO MAKE THE BLOOD RUN COLD.
WHAT IF HE SUDDENLY REACHES OUT TO GRAB AN ANKLE?
AND ONCE UP HERE, IT'S LIKE TRYING TO SLEEP OVER A STIFF.
PROBABLY HAVE NIGHTMARES... TALK IN MY SLEEP...
...AND MAYBE IF I THINK ABOUT SOMETHIN' GOOD WHILE I DRIFT OFF...
...LIKE THE FIFTY GRAND IN LOOT... STILL RIGHT WHERE I LEFT IT...
... WHERE THE COPS'LL NEVER FIND IT... SAFE IN THE GOTHAM CATACOMBS...
...FIFTY THOUSAND BIG ONES... ALL JUST WAITIN' TO BE PICKED UP... EASY AS WALKIN' IN YOUR SLEEP...
...TALKIN' IN SLEEP-WALK TALK... SLEEPIN' IN TALK-SLEEP...

THE NEXT DAY IS LITTLE BETTER FOR THE FORMER CAT BURGLAR NAMED COLLINS, AS FITFUL SLEEP LEADS TO AN IRRITABLE AWAKENING...
WHAT KINDA GARBAGE YOU GOT TODAY?
DON'T COME UP IN MY FACE, BRO.
YOU THINK THEY LET ME OUT TO THE BOOKSTORE?

AND WHEN COLLINS ACTUALLY SEES THE CHOICE OF READING MATTER...
THIS IS TOO MUCH! NOW THEY'RE ACTUALLY FEEDIN' US CAT-A-LOGS FROM THE LOUSY MYOO-ZEE-UM!
BORN OF DISGUST, THE TOSS IS CARELESS-- AND THE CATALOGUE LANDS RUDELY ON TOM BLAKE'S CHEST.
SLOWLY, HIS HEAD TURNS... AND HIS EYES BEGIN TO FOCUS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN WEEKS.

AS HE LOOKS AT THE COVER...
GOTHAM MUSEUM WINTER EXHIBIT 1984
BAST... GODDESS OF BEAUTY AND MYSTERY
...HIS FINGERS TWITCH...
...AND TOM BLAKE ABRUPTLY RETURNS TO THE LIVING.
YES.
YES!!
PICTURE NEWS
WHAT THE--?! YOU...YOU'RE BACK, BLAKE! BUT THE DOCS, THEY SAID YOU--
THE DOCTORS ARE IDIOTS!
I WASN'T CATAPHORIC OR CATATONIC-- I JUST LIKE TO TAKE CAT-NAPS.
WH-WHATEVER YOU SAY, BLAKE-- YOU ALWAYS WERE WEIRD...
...ESPECIALLY ON THE OUTSIDE-- WITH THAT FREAKY COSTUME OF YOURS.
THIS NIGHT, TOM BLAKE'S EYES NOW REACH ACCOMPANYING SHAFTS OF SUNLIGHT, TO THE SHINING SILVER WHICH EVER STIMULATES HIM...
THE MOON -- IN ITS CATABIBAZON DESCENDING NODE -- AND A GOOD OMEN.
EVEN CATARCHIC ASTROLOGY FAVORS ME, INDICATING IT'S THE PERFECT TIME TO BEGIN A NEW ENDEAVOR...
AND IT'S THE FOURTEENTH OF THE MONTH-- CATORCE IN SPANISH!
THAT CINCHES IT!
... FIFTY GRAND... STASHED IN SLEEP-CATACOMBS... GOTHAM...
COLLINS-- WAKE UP!
HUH--? WH--?
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE A LITTLE WAGER, COLLINS?
YOU MEAN... LIKE A BET?
4
CONTINUED ON 35TH PAGE FOLLOWING

Hi! My name is Mindy Newell. Okay, I know my moniker is unfamiliar to you, right now. Pretty soon, however, it will be gracing the pages of NEW TALENT SHOWCASE. There's been a lot of publicity about this project, but no one has thought to ask any of us ("us" being the aforementioned NEW TALENT) of our experiences. I thought it might be informative and encouraging for other aspiring comic professionals to learn a bit about the inner workings and machinations of being published.

I asked Dick, and he gave me permission to tell you about the phone booth hidden within the confines of 666 Fifth Avenue into which an ordinary, mild-mannered woman can enter and emerge seconds later as..... SUPERWRITER!!!!!!!

Well, so that's not exactly what happens. Sometimes my imagination gets a little carried away. I am a writer, after all. But I'm not mild-mannered, and I don't wear glasses, either.

How does it happen? I can only tell you of my own experience, and of the things I have been taught.

About a year ago, a note was made of the hunt for new faces at DC right on this page. I had written some articles for magazines, starting a nice collection of reject slips. There were also a pile of stories I had written, mostly for myself, sitting and collecting dust in one of my desk drawers. (What did I do for a living? I was a registered nurse.) But I had never written for any fanzines, nor had considered comics as a viable alternative for showing off any talent I might possess.

But I was at a crossroads in my life. Nursing had paled on me, even though the money was good...and I had vowed never to become the gruff, bitter type, feeling trapped in a job that calls for so much. A nurse means **caring.** I had what has been termed as "post-divorce syndrome": throwing myself into a variety of activities.

So it was a combination of these factors, plus curiosity, that made me sit down, compile a character and storyline, and send it off to Sal Amendola, he being the NEW TALENT COORDINATOR. Poor guy. His desk has never looked the same. Among the hundreds of manila envelopes he plowed through was mine.

First there was some preliminary correspondence. Just enough to get my hopes up. Of course, I knew better than to count my chickens before they hatched, but who cared? There was a **chance!**

About **six weeks** later, I found myself sitting in Karen Berger's office. (She being the editor of the SHOWCASE book). With typical New Yorker aplomb, I was very matter-of-fact as we sat and discussed a bit of my personal history, writing experience, story-line and plot possibilities. Right, Karen? I even managed to shake Len Wein's hand with just the right amount of nonchalance when he interrupted our discussion, and Karen introduced me. Uh, Karen, don't look at me like that. Well, never mind her, folks. I really was the height of Big Apple sophistication.

Then I was sent home with stacks of material on comic writing. Actually, I floated home. Why, I even got stuck in the Holland Tunnel for an hour and a half, and couldn't care less. If you've never gotten stuck in the Holland Tunnel.... How many of you have ever read Dante's Inferno? That's the idea. But I actually **welcomed** the traffic. Gave me a chance to think about what had transpired earlier.

Once I got home, I laid everything out in front of me. This included guidelines, old plot synopses and scripts, a couple of old House of Mystery's, and notes I had taken during my discussion with Karen. I didn't get to work right away.

But the next day, I tackled my typewriter with great fervor. There are many ways of writing a comic, but I was doing a **full script.** This entails art directions, panel breakdowns, sound effects, captions, and dialogue. Before one can graduate to other forms, a writer must learn to visualize the spread of the page. This includes understanding panel placement, the amount of action that can be contained in a single panel, caption and balloon placement, and the amount of words per panel.

The comic book is a visual medium. For the writer, this means learning to have an artist's eye. A course in journalism is helpful, too, since the words themselves must be kept to a minimum. Yet, the story must be well-paced and cohesive, neither artwork nor printed word dominating. They must work together.

This is all part of the basics. Many writers prefer to always work with a full script, feeling that it helps them in planning and seeing the story in their mind's eye. I find myself in that fraternity. I don't know if I'll ever "graduate" to descriptive page breakdowns. (Or maybe I'm just starting to feel comfortable with what I already know...we'll see.)

It took a while, but I finally finished my first script. It took numero visits to Karen, lots of re-writes, learning, and unlearning. But when I first saw the pencils of JENESIS done by Mark Beachum, it was something hard to describe. Sort of akin to the feeling I had when I gave birth to my daughter. Creativity personified. Amazing!

Since then, I've written three more stories. Has it come easier with each passing one? Yes and no. I understand the mechanics better. My dialogue is becoming more polished, my pacing more professional. But, I still make mistakes. And that's the hard part, at least for me. I find myself pushing harder all the time, getting angry for **not** being SUPERWRITER. I expect more of myself with each visit to Karen. Of course, she does, too. Sometimes, the harshest criticism can come from inside.

Are there common factors with us? Talent? Sure, I suppose. Still, there are other things, some more important. Determination to succeed. Maturity to handle criticism. Ability to fall on your face, get up, dust yourself off, and keep going. Knowing that others know more than you do. Accepting that. **Wanting to learn.** Timing. Luck. Discipline.

Finally, kudos must go to Dick Giordano, Sal Amendola, and Karen Berger. To Dick, for being the guiding light behind the drive to directly introduce and instill fresh faces into the industry. To Sal, for having the patience to listen as we have all cried on his shoulders at one time or another. And to Karen, for having the guts to take on a bunch of amateurs, and trying to turn us into pros.

Do I have any personal tips? Well, I shouldn't, but...sift through your record stack. Take out any John Williams score. Put on your headphones. Sit down in front of your typewriter. And **write!**

Excuse me. Have to go put the other side of THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK on.

Thanks, Dick!

Mindy

YES--A BET THAT I CAN STEAL BAST FROM THE GOTHAM MUSEUM--AND WHAT'S MORE, OUTWIT THE BATMAN IN THE PROCESS.
INDEED, I'LL USE THE THEFT ITSELF AS A LURE TO TRAP THE BATMAN!
WH-WHAT ARE THE STAKES?

IF I WIN, I GET YOUR UNRECOVERED LOOT IN THE CATACOMBS...
...BUT IF I FAIL--MEANING YOU WIN--YOU GET MY CATMAN OUTFIT WITH ITS MAGICAL PROPERTIES GIVING THE WEARER NINE LIVES.

YOU SEE THESE SCARS? I WAS BURNED BY A GEYSER WHEN A PORTION OF MY COWL WAS RIPPED AWAY--ROBBING THE CAPE AND COWL'S PROTECTIVE POWERS.

MY LOOT--H-HOW DID YOU KNOW WHERE I HID IT?!
LET'S JUST SAY THAT WHEN YOU SLEEP, THE CAT DOES NOT HAVE YOUR TONGUE--BUT NEVER MIND THAT--THE IMPORTANT THING IS THE WAGER ITSELF.
ARE YOU IN?
WELL... MAYBE YOUR CRAZY CATMAN OUTFIT IS MAGICAL AND MAYBE IT AIN'T... BUT SEEIN' AS HOW YOU ALREADY KNOW WHERE MY LOOT IS...
...I GUESS I GOT NOTHIN' TO LOSE BY BETTIN'.

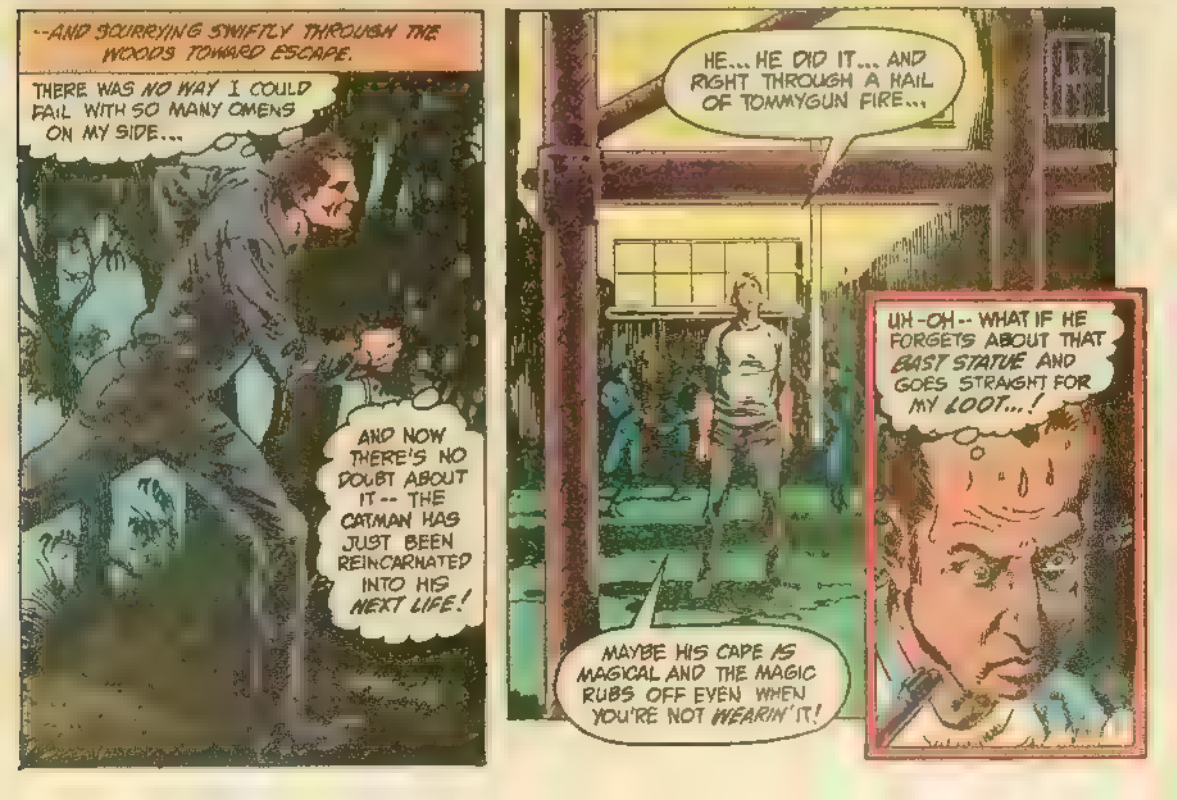
BESIDES, NO WAY YOU'RE GONNA BEAT THE BATMAN--YOU PROB'LY WON'T EVEN GET OUTTA THIS LOUSY PRISON...
...BUT IT SURE IS GONNA BE FUN WATCHIN' YOU TRY.

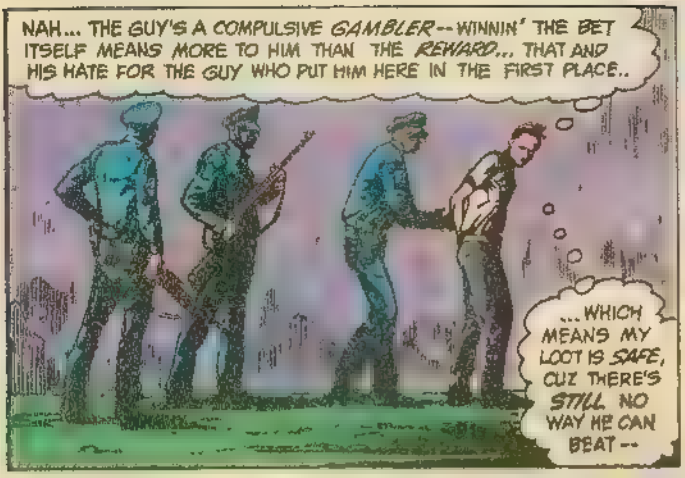
AND SO, A SHORT TIME LATER...
YOWLLLLL SHREEEYOWLL
WHAT THE--?!
SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE'S BEING MURDERED!

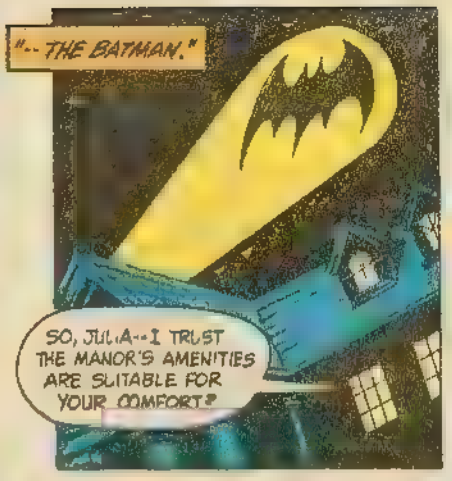
BUT THE ECHOES IN THIS CORRIDOR--TOO CONFUSING...
CAN'T TELL WHERE THE SOUNDS ARE COMING FROM...
5

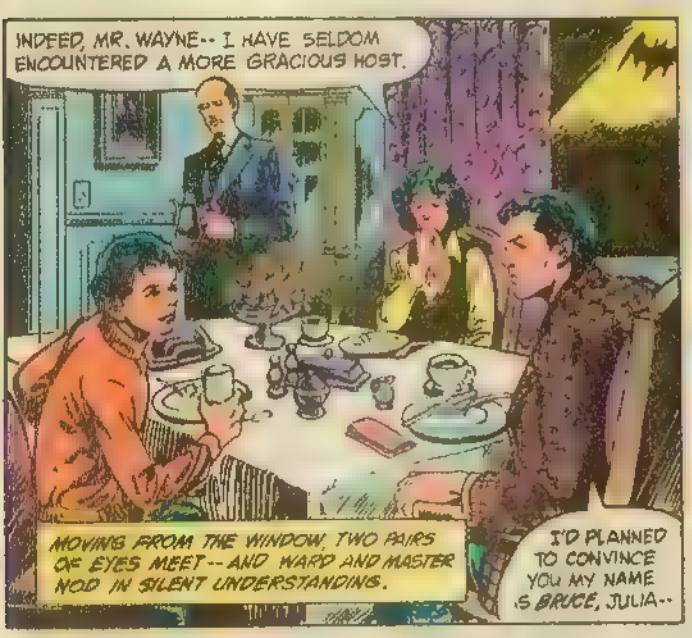
CAN'T EVEN TELL IF--
--UHN!
KRUNK
YOU SEE, COLLINS? LIKE TAKING MILK FROM A KITTEN...
MY CATERWAULING ALONE WOULD'VE ALARMED ANYONE--BUT I KNEW THE CATACOUSTICS OF THIS PLACE WOULD UTTERLY CONFUSE HIM.
NOW, COME ON--THEY'RE STILL MAKING REPAIRS TO THE PRISON WALL--WHICH MEANS THE SCAFFOLDING IS STILL IN THE YARD...
...AND DID YOU KNOW THAT ANOTHER NAME FOR WOODEN SCAFFOLDING IS CATAFALQUE?
UH...N-NO... BUT MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T BE SO HASTY ABOUT--
NOW, COLLINS--BREAK FOR IT!
I'M COMIN', BLAKE, BUT--
KRATCH

THE LIGHTS, BLAKE!
THEY'VE HEARD US!
SO WHAT, COLLINS?
THE CATGUT LINE WOVEN FROM THE STRINGS OF INMATES' GUITARS IS DESTINED TO WORK!
BRRRRRRRT
AND I'VE HAD MY EYES ON THIS CATAWBA CATALPA TREE FOR A LONG TIME!


--AND SCURRYING SWIFTLY THROUGH THE WOODS TOWARD ESCAPE.
THERE WAS NO WAY I COULD FAIL WITH SO MANY OMENS ON MY SIDE...
AND NOW THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT -- THE CATMAN HAS JUST BEEN REINCARNATED INTO HIS NEXT LIFE!
HE... HE DID IT... AND RIGHT THROUGH A HAIL OF TOMMYGUN FIRE...
MAYBE HIS CAPE IS MAGICAL AND THE MAGIC RUBS OFF EVEN WHEN YOU'RE NOT WEARIN' IT!
UH-OH -- WHAT IF HE FORGETS ABOUT THAT BAST STATUE AND GOES STRAIGHT FOR MY LOOT...!


NAH... THE GUY'S A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER -- WINNIN' THE BET ITSELF MEANS MORE TO HIM THAN THE REWARD... THAT AND HIS HATE FOR THE GUY WHO PUT HIM HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE..
...WHICH MEANS MY LOOT IS SAFE, CUZ THERE'S STILL NO WAY HE CAN BEAT --




INDEED, MR. WAYNE -- I HAVE SELDOM ENCOUNTERED A MORE GRACIOUS HOST.
MOVING FROM THE WINDOW, TWO PAIRS OF EYES MEET -- AND WARD AND MASTER NOD IN SILENT UNDERSTANDING.
I'D PLANNED TO CONVINCE YOU MY NAME IS BRUCE, JULIA --

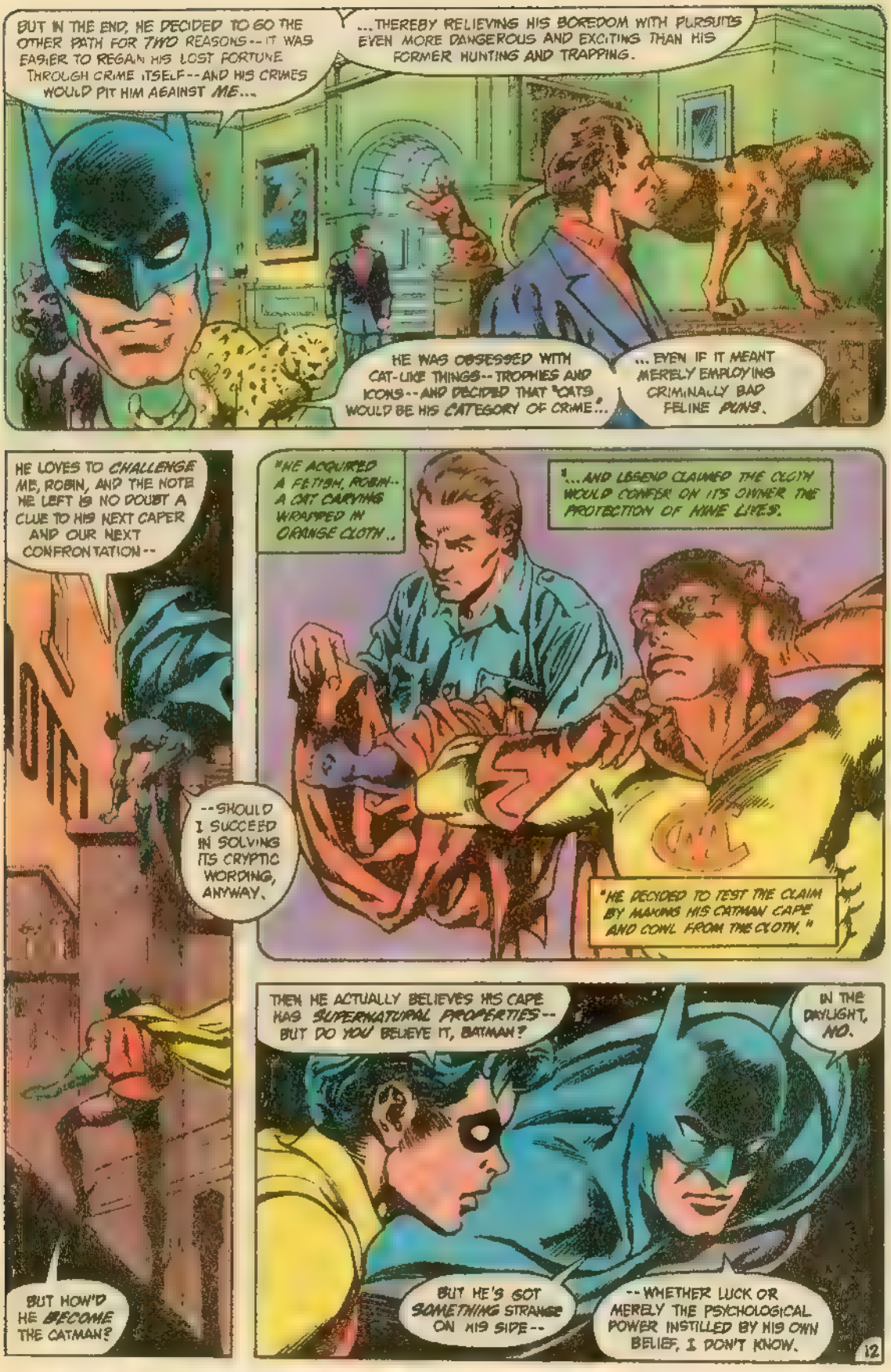
-- BUT YOU'LL FORGIVE US FOR SKIPPING DESSERT.
THERE'S SOME "HOMEWORK" WE MUST CATCH UP ON
BELIEVE ME, SIR, I FULLY UNDERSTAND -- AND, IF MY DAUGHTER DOES NOT, I'M SURE SHE WILL AT LEAST FORGIVE.

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

A "HOUSEGUEST," IS SHE? NOW HE'S NOT EVEN TRYING TO CONCEAL THEM.
HE'S GOT THEM ANSWER NG HIS PHONE.
PROBABLY DARNING HIS SOCKS, TO BOOT!
TELL ME, FATHER -- A MAN LIKE MR. WAYNE HAS MANY LADY ADMIRERS, NO?
MR. WAYNE ENJOYS FEMALE COMPANY, YES. WHY DO YOU ASK, JULIA?
ABSOLUTELY NO REASON AT ALL!
MM-HM... OF COURSE NOT.
AND DEEP UNDER THE MANOR IN THE CHILL SHADOWS OF THE BAT CAVE..
HOPE THE BATSIGNAL SPELLS SOMETHING EXCITING, BRUCE..
GOTHAM'S BEEN TOO DULL LATELY.
YES, JASON, IT'S BEEN AT LEAST A WHOLE WEEK SINCE OUR STREET BRAWL WITH DR. FANG'S ARMY OF THUGS...
MAYBE COMMISSIONER GORDON WILL HAVE ANOTHER MOB FOR US TO TACKLE.
OKAY, OKAY, SO MAYBE I AM A LITTLE GUNG-HO...
BUT LET'S AT LEAST HOPE IT'S WORTH MISSING ALFRED'S DESSERT.

POLICE HEADQUARTERS...
OKAY--GORDON SAYS TO CUT THE SIGNAL.
BATMAN AND ROBIN ARE HERE--HE'S TAKING THEM TO THE EVIDENCE ROOM.
A BREAK-IN, BATMAN--A THEFT RIGHT HERE UNDER OUR NOSES, AND IF WORD OF IT GETS OUT TO THOSE REPORTERS OLIVIA ORTEGA AND VICKI VALE...
WHAT WAS STOLEN GORDON?
THAT'S EVEN WORSE NEWS, I'M AFRAID...
THE STOLEN ARTICLE WAS RIGHT HERE--THE CATMAN'S COSTUME.
WHAT?!
YES--WE JUST RECEIVED WORD OF THOMAS BLAKE'S ESCAPE FROM PRISON LAST NIGHT... AND HE LEFT THIS NOTE ON THE SHELF WHERE HIS COSTUME WAS KEPT AS EVIDENCE.
IT'S FOR YOU, BATMAN.
WHO ELSE?
"LEAVING HOME FOR WAR IN USUAL STYLE... DOUBLE PRIZE THE SAME AS EVER... NEW REINCARNATION ON DISPLAY SOON... CATCH ME IF YOU CAN."
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT, BATMAN?
NOTHING YET, COMMISSIONER, BUT KEEP ONE OF YOUR CAGES OPEN--THE GAME'S AFOOT ONCE AGAIN.
10

ON A SLEAZY STREET--
DAY
ROMS
WEEK
--NEON SPUTTERS...
...AS, IN LURID LIGHT, THE CATMAN PREENS.
MORE THAN ONE WAY TO SKIN A TOM BLAKE--
--AND THE BEST WAY AS EVER IS BY PUTTING ON MY CATMAN DUDS.
NOW, LET'S SEE... MY KIT BAG IS STOCKED WITH SERRATED CATARANG... CAT-LINE... CAT-CLAW GLOVES -- EVERYTHING I'LL NEED TO WIN THE PRIZE..
...AND TO TRAP THE BATMAN.
Y'KNOW, I THINK YOU'D BETTER TELL ME ABOUT THIS CATMAN...
YOU'VE MENTIONED HIM, BUT IF WE'RE GOING TO MIX IT, I'D BETTER KNOW [illegible]YTHING.
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, ROBIN..
TOM BLACK WAS A BIG CAT TRAPPER WHO AMASSED A FORTUNE IN FEES FROM ZOOS AND CIRCUSES AROUND THE WORLD...
BUT HE WAS ALSO AN INVETERATE GAMBLER.. AND HE LOST EVERY PENNY IN CASINOS AS SOON AS HE RETURNED TO CIVILIZATION.
HE COULD HAVE GONE BACK TO TRAPPING, BUT HE DECIDED HE WAS BORED.
HE BRIEFLY TOYED WITH THE NOTION OF BECOMING A CRIMEFIGHTER LIKE ME, IN A CRAZY SCHEME TO WIN THE LOVE OF BATWOMAN..
11


BUT IN THE END, HE DECIDED TO GO THE OTHER PATH FOR TWO REASONS -- IT WAS EASIER TO REGAIN HIS LOST FORTUNE THROUGH CRIME ITSELF -- AND HIS CRIMES WOULD PIT HIM AGAINST ME...
...THEREBY RELIEVING HIS BOREDOM WITH PURSUITS EVEN MORE DANGEROUS AND EXCITING THAN HIS FORMER HUNTING AND TRAPPING.
HE WAS OBSESSED WITH CAT-LIKE THINGS -- TROPHIES AND ICONS -- AND DECIDED THAT "CATS" WOULD BE HIS CATEGORY OF CRIME...
...EVEN IF IT MEANT MERELY EMPLOYING CRIMINALLY BAD FELINE PUNS.
HE LOVES TO CHALLENGE ME, ROBIN, AND THE NOTE HE LEFT IS NO DOUBT A CLUE TO HIS NEXT CAPER AND OUR NEXT CONFRONTATION --
--SHOULD I SUCCEED IN SOLVING ITS CRYPTIC WORDING, ANYWAY.
"HE ACQUIRED A FETISH, ROBIN -- A CAT CARVING WRAPPED IN ORANGE CLOTH..
"...AND LEGEND CLAIMED THE CLOTH WOULD CONFER ON ITS OWNER THE PROTECTION OF NINE LIVES.
"HE DECIDED TO TEST THE CLAIM BY MAKING HIS CATMAN CAPE AND COWL FROM THE CLOTH."
BUT HOW'D HE BECOME THE CATMAN?
THEN HE ACTUALLY BELIEVES HIS CAPE HAS SUPERNATURAL PROPERTIES -- BUT DO YOU BELIEVE IT, BATMAN?
IN THE DAYLIGHT, NO.
BUT HE'S GOT SOMETHING STRANGE ON HIS SIDE --
-- WHETHER LUCK OR MERELY THE PSYCHOLOGICAL POWER INSTILLED BY HIS OWN BELIEF, I DON'T KNOW.
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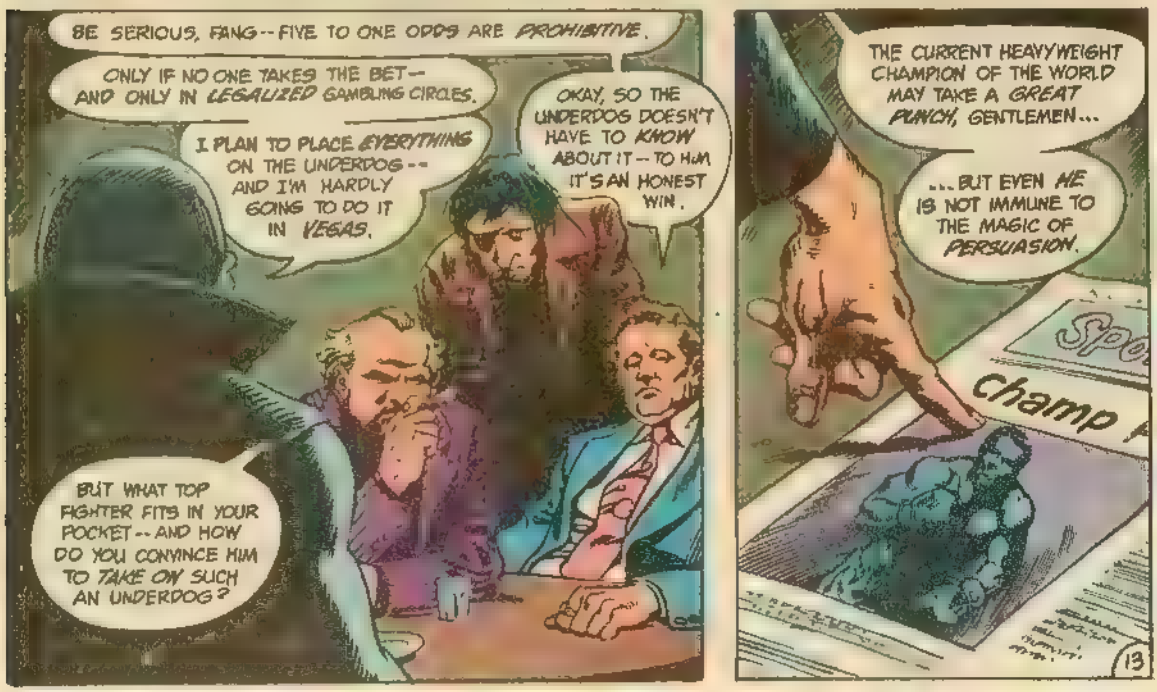
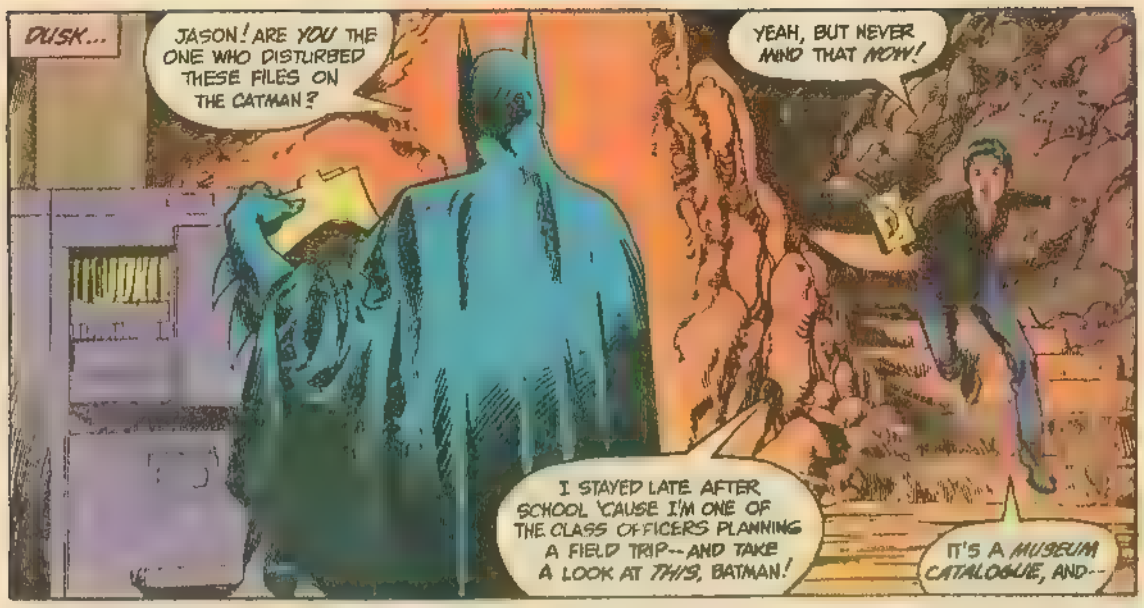
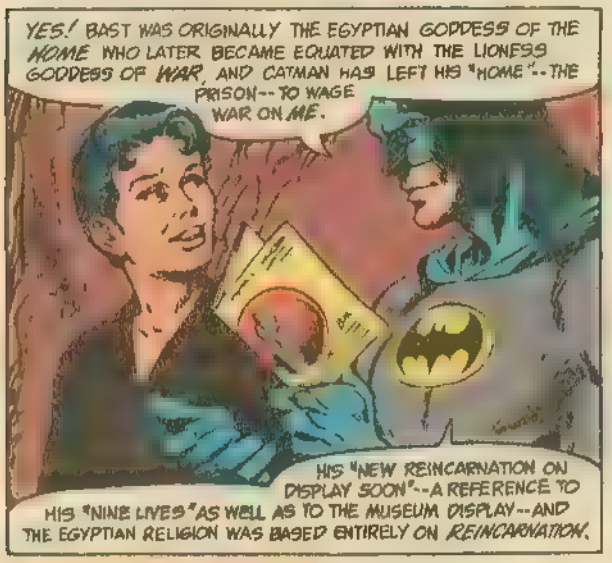
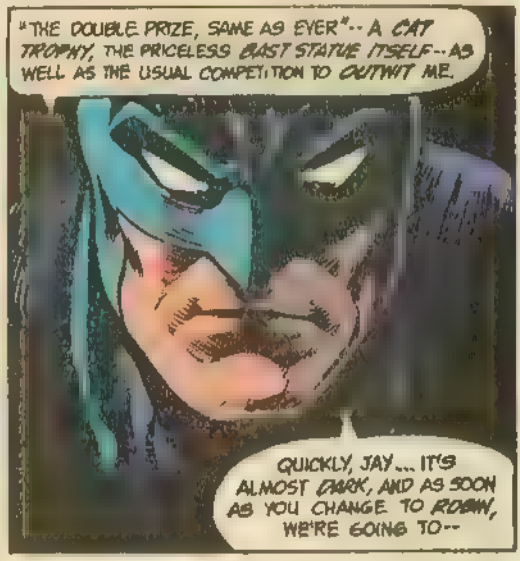
IN THE TIMES I'VE FACED HIM, HE'S CHEATED CERTAIN DEATH REPEATEDLY--PERHAPS MORE THAN NINE TIMES.
BUT SO HAVE YOU.
YES... AND EVERY TIME FEELS LIKE ONCE TOO OFTEN.
COME, ROBIN, IT'S ALMOST DAWN...
WE'LL RESUME THE HUNT AT DUSK.
OKAY, BATMAN...
...BUT I SURE DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF YOUR VOICE.
FATALISM DOESN'T SUIT YOU.

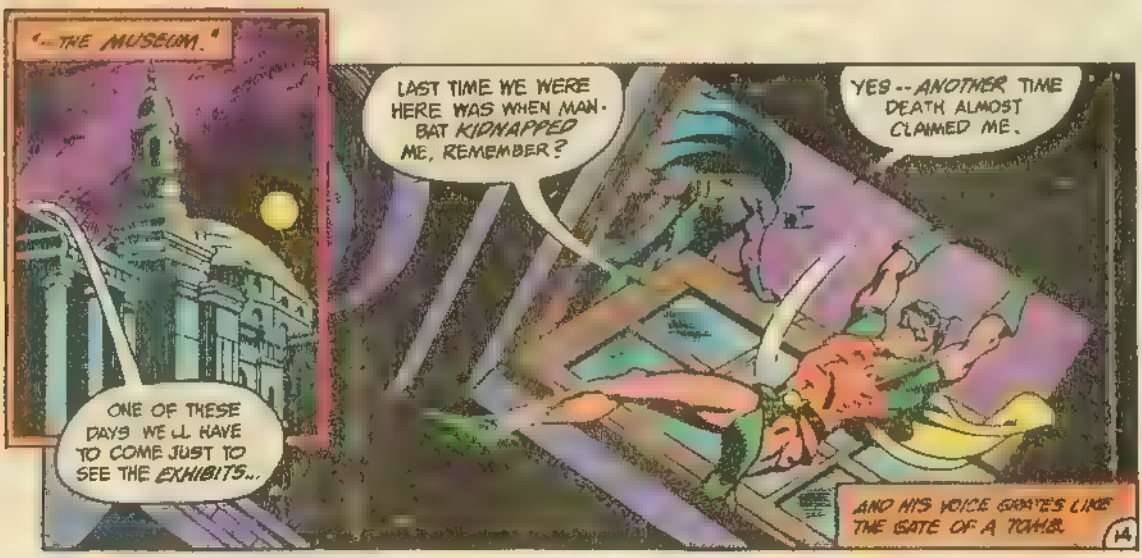
IN A SMOKY ROOM ELSEWHERE IN GOTHAM, OTHER TROUBLE BREWS..


BE SERIOUS, FANG--FIVE TO ONE ODDS ARE PROHIBITIVE.
ONLY IF NO ONE TAKES THE BET--AND ONLY IN LEGALIZED GAMBLING CIRCLES.
I PLAN TO PLACE EVERYTHING ON THE UNDERDOG--AND I'M HARDLY GOING TO DO IT IN VEGAS.
OKAY, SO THE UNDERDOG DOESN'T HAVE TO KNOW ABOUT IT--TO HIM IT'S AN HONEST WIN.
BUT WHAT TOP FIGHTER FITS IN YOUR POCKET--AND HOW DO YOU CONVINCE HIM TO TAKE ON SUCH AN UNDERDOG?
THE CURRENT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE WORLD MAY TAKE A GREAT PUNCH, GENTLEMEN...
...BUT EVEN HE IS NOT IMMUNE TO THE MAGIC OF PERSUASION.
Spo
champ
13

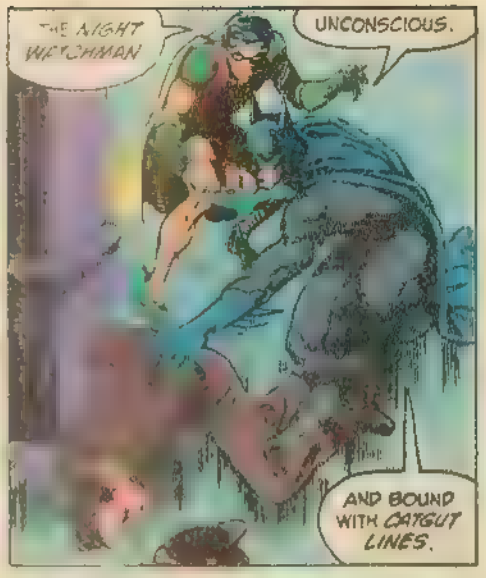

DUSK...
JASON! ARE YOU THE ONE WHO DISTURBED THESE FILES ON THE CATMAN?
YEAH, BUT NEVER MIND THAT NOW!
I STAYED LATE AFTER SCHOOL 'CAUSE I'M ONE OF THE CLASS OFFICERS PLANNING A FIELD TRIP--AND TAKE A LOOK AT THIS, BATMAN!
IT'S A MUSEUM CATALOGUE, AND--


YES! BAST WAS ORIGINALLY THE EGYPTIAN GODDESS OF THE HOME WHO LATER BECAME EQUATED WITH THE LIONESS GODDESS OF WAR, AND CATMAN HAS LEFT HIS "HOME"--THE PRISON--TO WAGE WAR ON ME.
HIS "NEW REINCARNATION ON DISPLAY SOON"--A REFERENCE TO HIS "NINE LIVES" AS WELL AS TO THE MUSEUM DISPLAY--AND THE EGYPTIAN RELIGION WAS BASED ENTIRELY ON REINCARNATION.

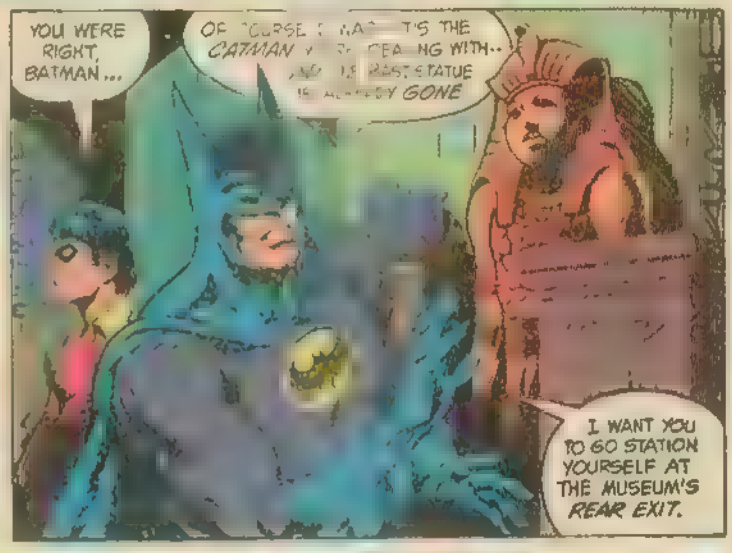

"THE DOUBLE PRIZE, SAME AS EVER"--A CAT TROPHY, THE PRICELESS BAST STATUE ITSELF--AS WELL AS THE USUAL COMPETITION TO OUTWIT ME.
QUICKLY, JAY... IT'S ALMOST DARK, AND AS SOON AS YOU CHANGE TO ROBIN, WE'RE GOING TO--


"...THE MUSEUM."
ONE OF THESE DAYS WE'LL HAVE TO COME JUST TO SEE THE EXHIBITS...
LAST TIME WE WERE HERE WAS WHEN MAN-BAT KIDNAPPED ME, REMEMBER?
YES--ANOTHER TIME DEATH ALMOST CLAIMED ME.
AND HIS VOICE GRATES LIKE THE GATE OF A TOMB.

LIKE WRAITHS, THEY MOVE PAST ANCIENT BONES -- AND ROBIN'S THOUGHTS AGAIN TURN DARK..
HE'S TOO COLD -- REMOTE -- ALMOST LIKE A FIGHTER GETTING INTO A RING WHERE HE KNOWS HE'LL BE KNOCKED OUT.
IS IT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF HAVING ME TO WORRY ABOUT? OR IS HE --
OVER THERE, ROBIN.


THE NIGHT WATCHMAN
UNCONSCIOUS.
AND BOUND WITH CATGUT LINES.

HURRY ROBIN --
--AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT ANY ALARMS.
FIVE TO ONE THEY'VE ALREADY BEEN CUT.


YOU WERE RIGHT, BATMAN...
OF COURSE, THAT'S THE CATMAN WORKING WITH..
THE STATUE IS ALREADY GONE
I WANT YOU TO GO STATION YOURSELF AT THE MUSEUM'S REAR EXIT.

BUT, BATMAN, ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE --
GO, ROBIN.

NOW
OKAY, OKAY.
...BUT I SURE DON'T LIKE IT.

IN FACT, THE ONLY REASON I DIDN'T ARGUE MORE IS BECAUSE HE'S ALMOST AS GRIM AS HE IS FATALISTIC.
I JUST HOPE HE'S GRIM ENOUGH...

HRAOWLLLLLL
A CAT, ROBIN.
WHAT THE--?! SOUNDED LIKE--
FWSHSHSHSHSHSHSH
THE BOY WONDER LEAPS ON SHEER INSTINCT--
--AND IT IS NOT UNTIL THE AGILE CATABANG HAS BEEN JARRED TO A CLAWED STOP--
--THAT HE REALIZES WHERE THE LEAP HAS TAKEN HIM...
I WENT OVER THE BALUSTRADE!
AND THEN--
WH-WHAT--?!!
GOTTA LAND JUST RIGHT OR I'LL BREAK MY NECK!
BUT TOO DARK TO SEE WHERE THE FLOOR--
I'M CAUGHT-- IN SOME KIND OF ROPE-MESH...!
16

TO BE MORE PRECISE, ROBIN...
...THE "ROPE-MESH" IS CALLED--
KLUK
--A CAT'S CRADLE
AND NOW, MY SNARED BIRD, FAREWELL--SINCE IT'S TIME FOR MY REAL HUNT TO BEGIN...
NO! BATMAN--WATCH OUT--HE'S COMING!
BUT THE AVENGER OF THE NIGHT HAS VENTURED INTO DEEP GOTHAM BEYOND THE RANGE OF WARNING...
WEIRD FEELING.. HAUNTING ME JUST NERVES, NO DOUBT...
BUT IT'S BETTER NOT TO RISK JASON IF IT'S NOT NECESSARY...
HALL OF WARFARE
...ESPECIALLY SINCE I'M CONVINCED THE CATMAN IS STILL HERE IN THE MUSEUM...WAITING FOR ME...
.. IN THE HALL OF WARFARE.
17

HE CREEPS THROUGH THE HALL FOR SOME THREE MINUTES BEFORE THE MOCKING VOICE SOUNDS FROM NOWHERE AND EVERYWHERE ...
I HAVE QUITE A CATCH IN MY KIT BAG, BATMAN -- A SYMBOL OF MY REBIRTH ... WHICH I IMAGINE YOU'D LIKE TO DENY ME...
TOO MANY ECHOES IN THIS HALL-- EVEN A REAL BAT COULDN'T LOCATE THE SOURCE OF HIS VOICE, AND HE KNOWS IT.
FOR ONCE, I'LL HAVE TO RELY ON--
--LIGHT.
KLIK
BUT, UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU, BATMAN, IT LOOKS LIKE I'M IN THE CATBIRD SEAT...
...OF THIS...
KSH!
...CATAPULT!
18

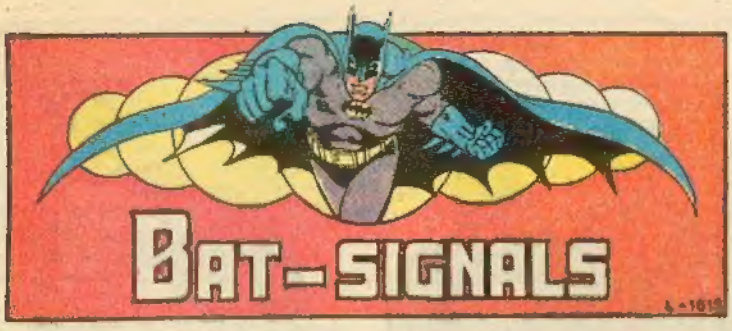
FORGIVE MY HASTE TO GREET YOU, BATMAN -- BUT IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME!
AT FIRST THE MASKED MANHUNTER STANDS FROZEN --
-- DODGING ASIDE ONLY AT THE LAST MOMENT...
SHRIEPT
SO LONG THAT I'D FORGOTTEN YOU EVADE DEATH ALMOST AS WELL AS ME!
BUT TRY THIS CATAPHRACT ARMOR FOR SIZE!
PASH!
AGAIN THE BATMAN TWISTS AWAY FROM CERTAIN DEATH --
SHUMP
-- FINALLY STRIKING BACK, THOUGH IN MANIFESTLY LESS LETHAL FASHION.
AND NOW, IN THIS HALL OF ANCIENT WARFARE --
SHRIMP
-- THE CAT AND THE BAT CLASH.

CAN'T BE CERTAIN, BUT THAT SOUNDED LIKE A LOUD CRASH WAY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MUSEUM -- WHERE THE HALL OF WARFARE IS LOCATED...
GOT TO USE EVERY BIT OF MY CIRCUS AERIALIST'S STRENGTH AND AGILITY... TO SWING THIS ENTIRE CAT'S CRADLE BACK AND FORTH...
.. AND WRIGGLE MYSELF FREE, INCH BY INCH ...
" ...RECKON IT'S TOO LATE "
UHH!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, BATMAN?
AND A LONGER CAT'S CLAW THAN YOU'RE USED TO, EH, BATMAN?
OUR LITTLE CAT-AND-MOUSE-GAME NEARS ITS END, AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR THE CLIMAX.
..KNOWN IN DRAMA, INCIDENTALLY, AS THE CATASTASIS.
IS YOUR HEART NOT IN IT THIS TIME?
SLOW NO DOWN?
RUNNING OUT OF TRICKS?
AHEH -- WHAT'S THIS?
A JAPANESE CATAN SWORD.. ANOTHER GOOD OMEN FOR ME...
20

FINALLY!
NOW TO REACH THE BALUSTRADE...
A CAKEWALK FOR ME...
...BUT IT'S STILL TAKING TOO MUCH TIME--
--AND IT'S FAR TOO QUIET IN THE HALL OF WARFARE!
CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELING THAT BATMAN HAD SOME KIND OF PREMONITION--WHICH COULD BE SELF-FULFILLING...
21

THE STATE PEN: MORNING.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
HE DID IT! I DON'T BELIEVE IT-- BUT HE BEAT THE BATMAN!
AM GAZETTE
THEFT OF PRICELESS BAST STA
Catman Injures Batman
Caped Crusader listed in critical condition
WHICH MEANS HE WON THE BET AND NOW HE'LL GET MY LOOT-- AND I'LL NEVER GET HIS CAPE OF NINE LIVES...
...WHICH MUST WORK IF HE BEAT THE BATMAN..
SALE!
WAIT A MINUTE... UNLESS I BUST OUTTA HERE...
... AND HUNT HIM DOWN...
... STEAL HIS CAPE... WHICH SHOULDN'T BE HARD FOR A CAT BURGLAR LIKE ME...
GOTHAM POLICE HQ...
RISKY BUSINESS, BATMAN...
PERHAPS, COMMISSIONER -- BUT AS LONG AS HE'S WILLING TO DEAL FOR A LIGHTER SENTENCE, WE'VE GOT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT.
AND WHAT TIME DID YOU ENTER THE MUSEUM?
JUST AFTER DARK...
YES, WE'VE WANTED TO RECOVER COLLINS' MISSING "CAT BURGLAR" LOOT FOR A LONG TIME...
...BUT I STILL SAY THE CATMAN KNOWS WHERE IT IS HIMSELF!
PERHAPS -- BUT IF HE CLAIMS COLLINS MUMBLED NOTHING MORE THAN "CATACOMBS" IN HIS SLEEP...

I KNOW, I KNOW -- WE COULD SPEND YEARS SEARCHING THAT WARREN OF CAVERNS AND TUNNELS...
YOU'VE HUNTED THEM LONG ENOUGH WITHOUT EVER STUMBLING ON THE LOOT... BUT LORD ONLY KNOWS HOW LONG WE CAN FOOL THE PRESS. "CRITICAL CONDITION," INDEED!
I'M GLAD YOU CAN'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ. WHEN I SAW CATMAN READY TO CHOP DOWN WITH THAT SWORD...
IN A WAY, I WAS IN CRITICAL CONDITION, ROBIN...
"IT SEEMED LIKE A NIGHTMARE FINALLY COMING TRUE... BUT LUCKILY --
"...I WAS ABLE TO COUNTER HIS CAT AN WITH MY OWN APPROPRIATELY NAMED WEAPON...
KROK
"...A BAT ON."
YOU MIGHT EVEN SAY MY VICTORY WAS A CATHARSIS OF SORTS.
OHHH... PLEASE!
ALL RIGHT, APOLOGY TENDERED.
BUT NOW WE'D BEST START LAYING OUR OWN TRAP, ROBIN...
"...FOR A CERTAIN CAT BURGLAR NAMED COLLINS,"
HEH HEH -- ANOTHER HOUR OF CARVING... AND FREEDOM, HERE I COME!
IN THE NEXT DETECTIVE: CLOTHES MAKE THE CAT(MAN)



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Dear Doug & Friends,

I just finished reading the three-part Batman vs. Joker epic, which brings the curtain down on the 1983 season—a very good year, incidentally, for Batman fans. The coordination between the two Bat-titles, as well as the splendid quality in both writing and art and the remarkably dramatic events which have recently unfolded, made for a truly outstanding year—and the Joker saga was a fitting conclusion. Doug Moench did a nice job on his most complex and ambitious BATMAN tale to date, earmarked with social, political, and psychological observations as well as extra touches of insightful characterization. The Joker and Batman were both superbly handled, and the adventure's globe-trotting aspect added extra excitement. Jason Todd's appearance as the new Robin was a stirring sight, even though I've long been anticipating it. The reactions of the various characters were interesting and realistic. I'm even beginning to enjoy Ms. Vicki Vale for a change.

Perhaps the largest single weakness in the tale was the Batman's sacrifice of a multimillion dollar Batplane to free himself from a trap that was not all that deadly to begin with.

The Joker's craziness, however, was masterfully presented. And I think Jason Todd should eventually take up the name, costume, and appearance of the original Robin. Quite simply, it seems the least confusing thing to do and fits into the Batman mythos far more comfortably than a new partnership between Batman and Bird-Boy or whomever.

I can't say enough about how much I'm enjoying the collective artistry of Don Newton, Gene Colan, Alfredo Alcala, Bob Smith, Adrienne Roy, and John Costanza. Mood and atmosphere are beautifully sustained, and the action is stunning.

Based on the subplots in place at the close of 1983, I'd say '84 will be off to a grand start. I wish you all much good fortune. You hold in your talented hands the fate of my favorite character; take good care of him.

Wallace Lee Hopkins
Box 160
Leaf River, IL 61047

We're certainly trying, Wallace. But about your one complaint: We wonder ... would you still feel the Batman's situation was "not all that deadly" had you been stuck in the Batplane's cockpit while machine-gun bullets strafed the engine and fuel tank?

And thanks for your comments regarding the new Robin; like those of many other readers, they seem to indicate we've made the right choices in guiding the futures of Dick Grayson and Jason Todd...

*****

Dear Editor:

The Joker isn't quite the *Clown* Prince of Crime he was in the fifties and sixties (note the absence of maniacal laughter punctuating each and every dialogue balloon), but time certainly hasn't diminished his penchant for hatching lunatic schemes on a grand scale.

I can't imagine what significance Guatemala might have for the Grim Jester, but then again I learned long ago never to attempt a sane rationalization of his bizarre exploits. I simply sit back and enjoy them to the fullest.

"Keep the change, Jake"—page 10, panel 6. I wonder what that cabbie's last name is, Doug?

Jeffrey Lowndes
809 Sunset St.
Scranton, PA 18509

Doug says it was probably Liebowitz, Smythe, or Ramirez—but frankly he hasn't given that particular cabbie much thought lockley...or even lately.

*****

Dear Len,

What a remarkable comic BATMAN #365 was. (Still is, for that matter, but I'm referring to my reactions when I read it some 60 minutes ago.) If only...*if only*...I didn't have this nasty habit of turning to the letters pages first. This month, of course, the lettercol was printed opposite Don Newton's outstanding full-page final scene, and the story's "sting" was therefore prematurely delivered.

Mind you, I still enjoyed reading the story, which is hardly surprising, considering Doug Moench wrote it. I'm really happy with Doug's tenure on BATMAN (and DETECTIVE), you know. His way of making characters so completely believable and interesting is a boon to whatever title he works on. If there's such a thing as the complete comic book writer, Doug is it. (Now if we could only see the Batman operating during *daylight* hours, at least once in a while...)

Speaking of which, I'm hoping the imminent addition of Jason to the spotlight will tempt Doug to "lighten up" the Batman somewhat, perhaps by placing more emphasis on his role as public protector as opposed to vigilante (with apologies to Merv Wolfman). Let's face it: the "avenger of the night" has been less than a commercial bonanza, right? I for one can relate more to a crime-fighter who welcomes the light as well as the shadows. You *did* ask us to tell you what you're doing wrong, didn't you? This is the *only* thing I feel needs rectifying...

Dale Coe
41 Whitecross Road
Warrington
Cheshire, WA5 1LR, ENGLAND

Funny you should mention it, Dale. Daylight or no, Doug has noticed a subconscious change in his handling of the Batman character of late. Editor Len must have been right when he said: "It's weird; the Batman becomes a different person with Robin at his side. He talks different, acts different—the kid does something good to him."

Indeed.

*****

AN ODE TO THE BATMAN:

He wears the legend of Batman, stalking streets by night,
Assuring citizens of Gotham that all is right.
But should you find him hot on your tail,
Know that the jig is up and it's off to jail.
An awesome fighter is the Batman it's plain to see,
Ten rounds with him is no one's cup of tea.
He has a new apprentice, Jason by name,
Taking the place of Robin, gone off to Titans fame.
When the Bat-signal sweeps high in the sky,
We know the Batman will swiftly reply.
The man is blessed with agility and speed,
To thrash hoodlums that's all he'll need.
In issue 365 the art is just keen,
Newton draws Batman the best I've ever seen.
The Joker is hardly a wimpy little foe,
Yet the outcome of the battle we already know.
The standard of your comic remains quite high,
For the money paid, it's an excellent buy.

So here's my thanks to all of you, The talented members of Batman's crew.

Eric James Baich
77A Fines Drive
Regina, Saskatchewan
CANADA S4N 6C1

Thank you, Eric, for your odd little letter,
Its sequence of rhyme makes our day red-letter better.

*****

Dear Len, Doug, Don, and Company:

It was mere whim of the moment that made me purchase BATMAN a few months back. I'd followed the Darknight Detective's exploits off and on since the 60's, but reading BATMAN was always more or less depressing for me. My God, this was a *character*, one of the most inspired creations in the history of comics, just itching to be developed—but instead we got too many cardboard characterizations placed haphazardly in cardboard situations...

I finally purchased BATMAN again for two simple reasons: Doug Moench and Len Wein, two writers whose work for Marvel is legendary. Doug, I would have killed to get each month's copy of MASTER OF KUNG FU! So I bought the BATMAN issue, loved it, and have been haunting used book shops for back issues ever since, picking up a few here and there, and seeing how much I've missed these past few years. Gerry Conway's stint on the series was wonderful, as was Marv Wolfman's, from what little I've read. And you, Doug—you're in the process of putting all the pieces together. At last we have a Batman who is truly a "creature of the night," not the wisecracking buffoon portrayed all too often, despite the 70's respite provided by O'Neil and Adams. At last we have continued stories and—can it really be true?!—SUBPLOTS! The interweaving of Commissioner Gordon's apparent heart attack, Vicki Vale's departure, and Alfred's mysterious visitor was masterfully done. And Don Newton (as well as the inimitable Gene Colan in DETECTIVE) captures the mystery, the mood, the brooding atmosphere, of the original BATMAN. Beautiful.

In fact, what is so wonderful about this "new" Batman is that he isn't new at all. This is precisely what he was all about to begin with, way back when. Thank you for restoring the Batman to us. It is a joy to read—and a major contribution to contemporary mythology.

Achille David Di Bacco
171 Marguerita Drive
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

Then again, as this letter attests ... daylight and Robin or no, perhaps the Batman hasn't changed all that much in the past few months, after all...

*****

Dear Mr. Wein:

Bravo, encore, and a jolly good show to your creative crew for the superior presentation of the Darknight Detective in BATMAN #365. One word describes the movement of this story: *Smooth*—as it should be.

"Ruins" was a skillfully presented extrapolation of the basic story elements set in motion in the preceding BATMAN and DETECTIVE issues. The reason this particular story succeeds so well is due in large part to the expertise in showing the depth of the Batman's character, specifically the human part of his persona. Too often and in too many books, the protagonist's characterization is dominated by his impervious super-hero exterior.

The art in the past has been good, but I'm now seeing a definite improvement in Don Newton's art. His style is really becoming polished. Keep the good stuff coming; in my opinion, DC currently has the best to offer.

Jeff Ford
4041 SE Lenore Cir.
Troutdale, OR 97060

*****

Dear Mr. Wein & Co.:

Anyone who questions whether we're in another Golden Age of Comics needs to look no further than BATMAN #367.

First the artwork: Don Newton and Alfredo Alcala have combined to present some of the finest renditions of the Darknight Detective ever to grace this magazine. Mr. Newton's pencils have a style strongly reminiscent of Berni Wrightson's work, but with a special magic all Don's own. Mr. Alcala's unique brand of inking complements Newton's drawings so well that one suspects divine intervention in uniting these two great artists.

Then there's the writing: Ahh, the writing. I've followed Doug Moench's work since reading a piece of his in a Warren magazine back in the early 70's, and there's no writer in the business who comes close to such moody, moving works of consistently high quality. Thank you, and please continue.

The continuity between this mag and DETECTIVE is a godsend to Batmaniacs such as myself who used to wait a seeming eternity for the next installment of our favorite costumed hero. If this is the kind of innovative idea we can expect to see from you, Mr. Wein, then I strongly suggest you never leave your post.

Christian Groth
752 McMahon U. of Washington
Seattle, WA 98107

Not much we can say to all of that, Christian—except thanks, of course, and see you all next issue (but don't forget DETECTIVE COMICS in between!), since we seem to be running out of space here and now...

Good night, Biljo White, wherever you are!

DCP

Digital Comics Preservation

If you think you can do better,
then you should give it a try.